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## **Foreign Languages in the High Schools of Wisconsin.\***

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In the course of the world's history each century and, within its limits, each generation may be said to have specific problems to solve, be they political, economical or cultural in the broader or narrower sense of these terms. As to sequence, a nation must first acquire and make secure its political and economic stability before attempting to deal seriously and in a comprehensive way with purely cultural problems. To reverse the process means to disregard the laws of organic growth. The best illustration of this contention are Germany and Russia. In the former the political, social, and economic conditions have assumed well defined forms, and the German nation has thus been able to devote its energies to the solution of scientific and educational tasks. In the latter neither the political nor the economic demands have been adjusted in a satisfactory manner; in consequence the Russian people find it impossible to concentrate their efforts upon the realization of their cultural ideals. This is the one and only explanation for the retardation of progress and development, especially in the province of education, in "Half-Asia", as the empire of the Tsars is sometimes termed.

Our own country has thus far been preoccupied with the development of its natural resources and has not, until of late, found the time, so to speak, to devote itself to the same extent as the European nations, to the solution of educational problems. Besides, our forefathers had brought with them certain definite educational conceptions and ideals, and to these our nation has adhered religiously for some time. In the last twenty-five years, however, some of our leading educators began to educate public opinion to the necessity of modifying our educational standards, in order to create a school system which would be in keeping with the changed economic conditions and embody those scientific principles which have been tested and found hale within the last two or three decades. The reforms advocated involve a large and perplexing problem, since it encompasses all of the three divisions of our present educational system—the elementary school, the secondary school, and the college. The American Common School, our traditional eight year institution, is being severely criticized, especially as regards the quality of work done in the upper grades. Two distinct educational doctrines are promulgated. The champions of the first advocate a complete separation of the upper two grades of the common school and joining them to the first year of the

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\* Paper read in part before the Wisconsin Association of Modern Foreign Language Teachers, Oshkosh, 1916.

present four year high school, thus establishing a new type of school to be known as the junior high school or intermediate school. \*\*

This plan has the endorsement of a large number of men—superintendents, principals, and college professors—well known thruout the country. It is claimed that the junior high school, with its larger equipment, better teaching force, and a comprehensive plan for differentiated courses, will give the pupil the opportunity to test his abilities in every direction — vocational as well as academic — thus enabling him to choose wisely the course of studies to be pursued when entering the senior high school (i. e. the second year of the present four year high school) and later the college. It is likewise hoped that the new type of school owing to the many interesting courses and the flexibility in promotion (by subjects and on the basis of physical age) will greatly reduce school “mortality”. For the sake of brevity let us designate the champions of the junior high school plan the “progressives”. The opponents of this plan to whom we shall apply the term “conservatives,” are men of equal educational prominence. These maintain that the fundamental principle of the proposed redivision of the common school is pedagogically unsound. A disintegration of the American common school means to them a wilful and unwarranted destruction of an organic educational unit; more than that, a creation of a powerful wedge which would cleave our people into classes thus leading to a stratification of society. All of the reforms proposed by the advocates of the junior high school can be — in the opinion of the conservatives — conveniently carried out in the upper grades of the present system. All that is necessary, is to reshape the school schedule, so as to provide each with the needed activities, and to lengthen the school day and the school year in order to make room for the performance of these activities.

The progressive movement in Wisconsin has found its practical outlet in the establishment of a number of junior and senior high schools (Edgerton, Horicon, etc.), with the Wisconsin High School (the University demonstration school) in the lead. The conservatives will be interested to know that President Pearse of the Milwaukee Normal School is working on a plan by which the desired curriculum differentiation is to be brought about within the borders of the eight year school system. The plan is to be put into operation as soon as the necessary readjustments have been effected. For reasons obvious to practical school men such reconstruction must necessarily be gradual or else harm may

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\*\* The writer is fully aware of the many “types” or “combinations” forming the junior high school, as they have come into existence in the various parts of the country. In this article the term “junior high school” means a part of the six-three-three plan.

be done to one or the other well developed school activity in the present system.

The proposed — and in some parts of the country accomplished — reconstruction of both the common and high school courses, whether within the traditional educational framework or on the junior high school basis, can not fail to arouse the keenest interest among the teachers of foreign languages, modern as well as classic. With the introduction into the upper grades of differentiated courses (academic, industrial, commercial, agricultural, etc.), opportunity is given to begin the study of foreign languages at an age more suitable for elementary linguistic discipline. The recommendation of the Committee of Ten (to the Nat. Educ. Asso. in 1894) that modern foreign languages be begun in the upper grades of our schools will then find the proper environment for being put into practice, and the pupils will no longer be compelled to wait for this study until they enter the higher institutions of learning.\*

One of the saddest blunders of our present educational system is to postpone the study of a foreign language until our young men or women enter the high school or even the college. By this time the student has begun to specialize for his life's work. He is interested preeminently in those studies which have a direct bearing upon his future career. To study the elements of a foreign language at this age means to many of them a disagreeable grind. In order to get to a point where the enjoyable part of the work begins — the foreign literature — he needs at least two years of elementary drill and one additional year of further study, and the student feels that too much of his valuable time (particularly in college) must be devoted to a study which promises comparatively scant returns, as far as his vocational interests and ambitions are concerned. Hence results that resentment which has been so frequently voiced, especially on the part of the students whose linguistic abilities are not very pronounced.

In the reorganized school system the pupil will begin to study a foreign language at an age when he is less selfconscious (and likewise less conscious of his surroundings), more willing to imitate freely, to memorize and to submit to mechanical linguistic drills. Having acquired a good pronunciation and a fair practical working vocabulary in the grades, the pupil, upon entering the high school proper, will be prepared for a higher type of work. He will be introduced gradually to the literature of the foreign people and to the more advanced forms of written and oral reproduction. Pupils for whom high school education is to

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\* In a few of our larger school systems foreign languages *are* taught in the grades. The above statement applies, of course, to the larger number of schools where this is not the case.

be culminal, will be thus enabled to derive from the study of a foreign language real practical as well as cultural benefits; practical in so far as they will be able to apply the knowledge of the foreign language in their daily pursuits, whenever and wherever necessary; cultural in so far as the pupils will have acquired the taste for good literature and a standard of comparison of literary production, aside from having gained an insight into the intellectual and moral wealth of other peoples.

At the present time the conditions which obtain for the study of modern foreign languages in the Wisconsin high schools (and the situation is no better in other states) are far from being ideal. The value of the foreign language study is, to be sure, generally conceded, except by individuals chronically afflicted with myopia; but whether a foreign language should be given preference in a high school curriculum to such subjects as manual training, domestic science, agriculture, etc., especially in the smaller institutions with limited means, that is a question which has been and still is agitating the minds of principals and school boards and regarding which opinions are widely divergent. Until some twenty to thirty years ago most of the Wisconsin high schools offered, as a rule, two foreign languages — Latin and German, either as four year subjects or as four and two year subjects. The high schools, in those days, were looked upon as institutions whose primary object was to prepare the students for entrance to the college, and foreign languages were among the prescribed subjects. Conditions have changed considerably since that time. Our high schools are no longer looked upon as purely college preparatory but as life preparatory also. The curricula had to be, accordingly, enlarged and differentiated. About two decades ago manual training was introduced into a number of our high schools as one of the regular subjects. A little later (or simultaneously) domestic science was added. Then came agriculture and finally commercial subjects. All of these subjects require a rather expensive equipment. In order to enable even the smaller high schools to offer these disciplines, the State Superintendent was authorized to give state aid as follows: For manual training, domestic science, and agriculture — half of the cost of teacher, but not to exceed \$250 for each of these subjects taught in a high school. In case one of these subjects was also taught in the grades (seventh and eighth) the subsidy was fixed at one-half the cost of teacher, not to exceed \$350. For commercial subjects the state aid in the high schools was to be \$100 more than for the other three vocational subjects, but no state aid was to be allowed for more than any three of the subjects. The maximum amount of state aid which any one high school could secure is, therefore, \$850. At present at least 65% of our accredited schools are receiving state aid.

The injection of the vocational subjects into the system of our public high schools caused a considerable reaction as regards the teaching of foreign languages. The influx of the utilities necessitated a re-adjustment of the humanities. In order to make room for one or more of the vocational subjects, the foreign languages — being on the elective list — were naturally the first ones to suffer either abbreviation or elimination. The following table will illustrate the changes which have taken place in the enrollment in the foreign language courses of our accredited schools from 1909 till 1915:

BASIS OF COMPUTATION 230 SCHOOLS.

1909.

Total Enrollment	Greek		Latin		German		French		Spanish		Total percent of pupils studying for language
	Enrol	%	Enrol	%	Enrol	%	Enrol	%	Enrol	%	
30294	68	0.22	6710	22	10447	34.4	418	1.37	40	0.13	58.12

1915.

38766	20	.05	5480	14.1	10038	25.8	466	1.2	142	0.36	41.5 Loss 16.6
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In 1915 there were added 73 new schools, 30 of which offer no foreign languages.

4384	—	—	229	—	996	—	23	—	—	—	—
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Grand Total for 1915 :

43150	20	0.11	5709	13.2	11034	25.5	489	1.13	142	0.36	40.26 Loss 17.86
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GERMAN.

	1909. Basis 239 schools.		1915. Basis 313 schools.	
	No. schools	%	No. schools	%
1 year of German	8	3.34	19	6.1
2 years of German	181	75.69	205	65.3
3 years of German	23	9.62	33	10.5
4 years of German	15	6.27	16	5.1
	227		273	

LATIN.

1 year of Latin	6	2.5	8	2.5
2 years of Latin	11	4.6	24	7.6
3 years of Latin	63	26.3	69	22.
4 years of Latin	79	33.05	29	9.26
	<u>159</u>		<u>130</u>	

FRENCH.

1 year of French	5	2.08	7	2.2
2 years of French	10	4.1	10	3.19
3 years of French	1	0.4	2	0.63
4 years of French	2	0.8	3	0.95
	<u>18</u>		<u>22</u>	

SPANISH.

1 year of Spanish	1	0.41	4	1.27
2 years of Spanish	1	0.41	..	....
	<u>2</u>		<u>4</u>	

CHANGES IN GERMAN COURSES.

From 1909 until 1915.

<i>Decrease.</i>	<i>Increase.</i>
1 yr. course reduced to 0 in 3 schools.	1 yr. course enlarged to 2 in 8 schools.
2 yr. course reduced to 0 in 7 schools.	2 yr. course enlarged to 3 in 16 schools.
3 yr. course reduced to 0 in 2 schools.	2 yr. course enlarged to 4 in 4 schools.
2 yr. course reduced to 1 in 18 schools.	
3 yr. course reduced to 2 in 9 schools.	
4 yr. course reduced to 2 in 4 schools.	

Comparing the data in Table I, for the years 1909 and 1915,, it will be noticed that the number of pupils studying foreign languages has diminished by approximately 18%. Of the foreign languages Latin has fared worst, not so much in its total enrollment as in the nature of courses offered. Table II indicates that the number of schools offering straight four year courses in Latin has decreased by 24% ; the three year courses have gone down from 26% to 22%. Only in the two year courses is there a considerable gain. Greek has likewise suffered heavily. French shows a slight increase, as does Spanish. In German the loss has been somewhat less disastrous insofar as the four year courses show only a very insignificant decrease and the number of the three year courses

has even been increased by 1.5%. The biggest loss is in the two year courses, amounting to about 11%. The one year courses, to be sure, have increased by about 3%, but this must be construed as a loss rather than a gain, since they are in the great majority of cases nothing but the sad remnants of former two year courses, and are doomed, in all probability, to disappear altogether. On the other hand, a number of the stronger schools have enlarged their German courses from two to three years; in seven schools, out of the sixteen, in which this change has taken place, the increase is evidently due to the reduction in the Latin courses.

The schools in which — due to the influx of the vocational subjects — foreign languages in general and German in particular are bound to suffer more than elsewhere are, no doubt, the smaller institutions, especially the recently organized schools. Since almost all of them are eager to teach vocational subjects, and are striving to secure state aid, they exclude foreign language work from their curricula at the very outset in order to economize. Thus we witness this rare and amusing spectacle — *a state offering a premium for the discontinuation of foreign language work in its public high schools.*

As to the future, we may expect a still further decrease in the number of schools offering foreign language owing to the fact that, beginning with the academic year 1916-17, it will be possible for students to enter the University and to graduate without taking any foreign language. The weaker schools will presumably take advantage of this new legislative proviso and eliminate their one and two year courses in foreign languages, but there need be no fear that our more solid secondary schools will follow their example, provided we make our teaching attractive and effective, and that opens up the second chapter of my discourse: What measures should be taken to improve the teaching of the foreign languages in our secondary schools? And while I shall concern myself chiefly with the teaching of German, the underlying thought will apply with equal force to the other foreign languages as well.

The improvement in teaching can be effected from a twofold point of view — administrative and scholastic. Let us proceed to discuss the matter in the order indicated.

The first means for improvement of modern foreign language teaching in Wisconsin lies within the power and jurisdiction of our state superintendent and state legislature. The most vital problem which these bodies ought to be urged to consider is the establishment of uniform standards of certification for all secondary teachers. Licenses issued to candidates ought to specify distinctly what subjects the applicant is fully qualified to teach, and in what subjects he possesses only a minor pre-



paration. It might be well to differentiate between first and second grade certificates, according to the success with which the candidate has completed his scholastic requirements and practice teaching. At present only teachers of vocational subjects are required to obtain a special license, and it is entirely possible for a candidate with say a university diploma to obtain a position as teacher of German, in spite of the fact that the candidate may not have been endorsed by the German department of that institution. A cooperation between the superintendent's office and the educational and administrative boards of our colleges in this regard should be *enforced*, if necessary, by the state legislature.

Another needed reform pertaining to modern language work in our secondary schools is a closer supervision of these subjects. At present there is no person on the inspectional staff of our state superintendent competent to give to the modern language teacher helpful suggestions having a direct bearing on classroom problems. To be sure, the University departments of German and Romance languages do send out men to visit the high schools occasionally, but the number of schools visited by them annually is very small, not exceeding twenty-five in number (in German, 1915). Accordingly each of our accredited schools can be visited only about once every ten to fifteen years. Furthermore, every effort is being made by the state to discourage this visiting of the high schools by university men, instead of encouraging it. It is indeed high time for our law makers to take just a little more interest in educational matters of this type.

On the scholastic side, the standards and requirements with respect to the preparation of the foreign language teachers in the state of Wisconsin are to be sure higher than in most of the other states of our Union, but they are not yet what they should be. The time has come when graduation from a creditable four year college ought to be regarded as the minimum preparation for a high school teacher. In modern foreign languages we ought to require even more than that. The 1915 preliminary report of the Committee on the Collegiate Training of Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages appointed by the Modern Language Asso. of America (**Professor Hohlfeld, Wisconsin, chairman**) reads on this point as follows:

"Although very few institutions (i. e. colleges and universities) report that they require the master's degree from those intending to teach in secondary schools, almost all are agreed that they would welcome such a requirement, with the expectation that the greater part of the professional training could then be deferred till the graduate year in the interest of more breadth in the candidate's general education. Many are willing to advocate such an additional requirement. Large city schools

should be encouraged to require the master's degree, at least for the heads of the departments, and strong and promising students should be encouraged to work for it."

As regards actual conditions in our state, the school laws do not require even a graduation from a college for a certificate to teach in a high school, a diploma from a state normal school serves the purpose equally well. Accordingly a considerable number of normal school graduates find their way into our secondary schools, especially into the smaller institutions.

Since 1909 the number of normal school graduates obtaining positions as teachers of German has been steadily increasing. For the year 1909-1910 the reports obtained show the following distribution:

University of Wisconsin	126	}	Total college graduates	292=88%
Wisconsin State Colleges	42			
Out-of-State Colleges	34			
State Normal Schools	23	}	Total normal graduates	28=12%
Out-of-State Normals	2			

With the above let us contrast the statistics for 1915-16:

University of Wisconsin	120	}	Total college graduates	215=79.6%
Wisconsin State Colleges	74			
Out-of-State Colleges	21			
State Normal Schools	55	}	Total normal school grad's	55=20%

The reason for this increase in the number of institutions employing Normal School graduates is to be sought in the fact that the smaller high schools find themselves unable to pay the salaries which the college graduates justly expect. But this fact should in no way keep the foreign language departments of our University and our state colleges from raising their standards as regards the requirements for prospective teachers, in accordance with the basic idea expressed in the Report of the Committee on Collegiate Training of Teachers. For, after all, the decisive factor can not possibly be the number of candidates for teaching positions graduated annually from the University and colleges, but rather the quality of work done by these graduates.

Finally, a very potent factor for the improvement of teaching is the teacher himself. The means for the self-improvement, as regards the teachers of German, may be summed up as follows:

- 1) Enlarge your knowledge of the subject by attending the summer session at some reputable institution of learning. In Wisconsin practical courses for the teachers of German are offered at the University and at the Teachers' Seminary, Milwaukee (Address Director Max Griebisch, 558 Broadway).

- 2) Read extensively in the language you are teaching. If necessary write to the university department concerned for a list of readings. The departments stand ready to help you in this and in all other academic matters in which you may wish their assistance.
- 3) Subscribe to educational journals bearing upon your work. Your principal may be induced to furnish the necessary funds if the request is presented to him with the proper insistency. The newly founded *Modern Language Journal* and the *Monatshefte für Deutsche Sprache und Pädagogik* should be in every German teacher's library. You simply can not afford to do without them! Nor should you neglect to become familiar with some of the most important references which will be listed in the supplement of the „*Lesekanon*’ in preparation by your committee.
- 4) Do not experiment with new texts just to oblige the book agent. When choosing a text, be sure that it embodies the three prerequisites:
  - a) It must be a work by a good German author.
  - b) It must depict *German* life and *German* conditions. Texts like Heyse's Italian story „*L'Arrabiata*” or Schiller's French adaption „*Der Neffe als Onkel*” should not be on your reading list.
  - c) In style and content the text should be adapted to the needs of your pupils.
- 5) Do not overemphasize the German club by attempting such things as parliamentary practice or pretentious plays in German, especially with pupils of meager training in German; on the other hand, German songs, dialogues, games and playlets (given not more than once in a semester) will lend charm to your work and bring you into a closer contact with your pupils.
- 6) Be sure that you yourself have a clear conception of the value of foreign language training and stand ready to meet the attacks on this score by some rustic member of your board who may be blissfully ignorant as to the deeper significance of foreign language training. A brief statement on the value of foreign language training will be found in Bulletin No. 4, Jan. 1917 of the Wis. Asso. of Mod. For. Lang. Teachers.

And last, but surely not least, join the Wisconsin Association of Modern Foreign Language Teachers, and urge others to join it. No teacher of foreign languages can afford to isolate

herself in these days, if she has the least desire to keep abreast with the times, for, as Goethe says:

„Einmal für allemal gilt das wahre Sprüchlein  
der Alten:  
,Wer nicht vorwärts geht, der kommt zurücke!'  
So bleibt es.'”

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## Die Technik der Direkten Methode.

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Um von vornherein jedem Missverständnis vorzubeugen, möchte ich vor allem daraufhinweisen, dass sich die vorliegende Besprechung hauptsächlich auf die „High Schools” bezieht, was allerdings auch nicht gerade heissen soll, dass nicht manches davon auch auf den Unterricht an den „Colleges” und Universitäten anwendbar sein dürfte.

Wenn auch der Altersunterschied zwischen „High School”-Schülern und „College”-Studenten nicht sehr gross ist, so dürfen wir am allerwenigsten bei solchen Studien, wie die hier vorliegende, ausser acht lassen, dass die ersteren eben doch noch Kinder sind, und dass sich der Unterricht nicht nur ihrem Auffassungsvermögen, sondern vor allem ihrem *Gemütsleben* anpassen muss. Übersehen wir letzteres, so dürfte es kaum möglich sein, die oberste und erste aller Bedingungen, die den Unterricht erfolgreich machen, zu erfüllen; nämlich die, ein immer reges Interesse aufrecht zu erhalten. Unsere heutige Jugend lernt nicht mehr, weil die Eltern es wünschen, oder gar aus Lernbegierde. Verstehen wir es nun nicht ihr Interesse zu fesseln, so ist von vornherein jeder Erfolg ausgeschlossen; wir verlieren nicht nur unzählige, die sich sonst für das Studium moderner Sprachen gewinnen liessen, sondern erreichen auch fast nichts bei denen die dabei bleiben. Das Aussterben von Latein und Griechisch, die starke Abnahme des Sprachstudiums in den Schulen, in denen auch der modernsprachliche Unterricht noch nach der alten Weise geführt wird, dürfte als Beweis für die eben ausgesprochene Behauptung gelten.

Natürlich stehe ich der Tatsache nicht blind gegenüber, dass eine ganze Zahl kleinerer Land-„High Schools” besteht, in denen die Lehrerinnen wohl oder übel in zwei oder mehr Fächern unterrichten müssen,

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\* Vortrag, gehalten vor der deutschen Sektionsversammlung der „Central Division of the Modern Language Association of America” am 28. Dezember 1916 zu Chicago, Ill.